

## **FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**Submitted by:** USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

### **Finding:**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the USDA Forest Service (FS) and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) creates unnecessary and unintended barriers to efficient planning and accomplishment of fuels management projects. Likewise the MOU between the FS and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB), while more recent than the TRPA MOU, may have sections that inadvertently impair efficient implementation of fuels reduction projects.

### **Background:**

The MOU between the FS and TRPA was signed almost 20 years ago in 1989 and is out of date. The sections dealing with fuels reduction and the necessary associated activities, such as roads, do not reflect contemporary technologies and practices, especially considering the current aggressive goals and objectives to reduce the fuel loading within the Lake Tahoe Basin. At the time the MOU was signed, fuels reduction projects were modest in size and scope. The MOU focused more on other types of projects that were of greater concern, such as salvage logging resulting from extensive bug kill. In the past few years awareness of the threat of catastrophic wildfire in the wildland urban intermix has increased tremendously resulting in a better understanding of the need for aggressive fuels reduction projects. Concurrently, funding from sources such as SNPLMA have become available to accomplish intensive multifaceted large scale fuels management projects. Consequently the scope of fuels projects currently envisioned is not covered appropriately in the MOU.

The MOU between the FS and LRWQCB, while only a few years old, also does not address the nature of fuels reduction projects in light of current practices and emerging innovative technologies.

### **Impacts:**

- ✓ Fiscal – Reduced costs to agencies. FS cost and time to plan projects should be reduced and TRPA and LWQCB time in review and approval should be reduced
- ✓ Operational - None
- ✓ Legal – Revised MOUs would be compliant with each agencies regulations
- ✓ Labor - None

- ✓ Social - None
- ✓ Political – Positive demonstration of agencies working together to streamline processes and focus on results rather than process.
- ✓ Policy – None, revisions to MOU's would still be compliant with the regulations and policies of each agency.
- ✓ Health and safety – Less processing, planning time and cost mean more acres can be treated.
- ✓ Environmental - none
- ✓ Interagency – Clear roles and responsibilities described in updated MOUs will foster interagency cooperation and reduce conflicts arising from misunderstandings arising from unclear direction.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 1) The Commission recommends that the USDA Forest Service and the TRPA work cooperatively to revise their MOU in order to exempt fuels reduction projects and associated supporting activities from TRPA review and permit.
- 2) The Commission recommends that the USDA Forest Service and the LRWQCB review their MOU and revise any stipulations that impede project planning and implementation related to fuels projects and associated supporting activities.